

Linda Clair
Seven-day Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Centre, Australia
30 November – 7 December 2019
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 6b – Thursday morning discussion session

Question: The last retreat I did five days ago, I had a lot of heart stuff going on. Recently I don't feel any anxiety in my belly, it's just all in the heart region. I felt after the previous five-day retreat there'd been massive release, and over the last few days it's been challenging to have all this stuff coming back up here again and feeling tightness and contraction. I've been feeling into it as deeply as I can and with fidelity, and watching the fact that I want it gone, and watch that judgment and accept it's there. As you've said to other people, it needs to be there as long as it needs to be there, and who am I to judge. The day before yesterday I could feel the spatial structure of it and roots weaving into my psyche, and it felt like a chopped-off tree stump wedged in my heart. There was a beautiful moment where the breathing was gently rocking it and loosening it but it was so interwoven that it couldn't come out. It was much reduced after that but still there. I'm feeling into it and watching my judgment about it.

Linda: So yes, you'll feel differently after it. When it's gone for good, you'll know without a doubt. There'll be no question about it.

Question: I know it's related to a lot of childhood stuff through my mother. Just before I came here she had an episode where she got really anxious and fearful. She didn't want to admit it at first but I asked her where she felt it and it was exactly in the same region. I think it stirred it up in me as well.

Linda: It probably has. Good. So you've just been breathing and sitting with it. Of course you don't want it there, but the only way it will go is if you don't not want it there.

Question: Completely accept it being there.

Linda: For as long as it needs to be there. It will be interesting to see how your Mum feels when you get back.

Question: Yes, I want to spend a bit of time with her because she's really been struggling. It will be interesting if it's affected her in any way.

Linda: It probably has.

Linda: How are you P.? You're okay? Are you feeling a bit more settled or less disturbed?

Question: Yes. Using the technique again and again. Keeping it really basic because this fear is very primal and I don't think it will ever go away because it's also related to survival, from childhood. And it's not a fear that's unique to me. It's just that feeling to react to this situation is very deeply ingrained. Before I spoke to you about this, during two of those sits I felt that terror, the fear was everywhere – colours, sounds, everything. I went to bed and checked under the bed for the fear. I had really twisted dreams. It's very good for me to see how my life and behaviour is dictated by it, and also coming to terms that it is possible to die like that. But there is some security in change.

Linda: The only security is in change, in accepting that everything changes and not trying to find security in something fixed. And if you keep doing this, the fear does go – 99.999% of it goes. Then, it's not like the survival instinct isn't there, it's just as strong but in a different way – there's not that fear associated with it. The survival instinct is there and that doesn't need to include fear. People think you need fear to survive but you don't.

Question: I have a lot of work to do.

Linda: But don't look at that. Just keep going. You don't know, you really don't know. So don't think you know how much you have to do. Just let this whole thing humble you again and again and again.

Question: Something happened just prior to retreat and it keeps coming up so I'll get it out. When I was doing that night shift the week before, I was able to see my thinking. It's often dialogue, prosecuting someone else and defending myself. It can be very strong, very colourful, and sometimes extreme. That's alright, I've been seeing that for a while and I don't buy into it as much as I used to. Because it is so strong I can have a laugh about it and move on. But this time there was an inkling about why it's so ridiculously strong. It felt like it's trying to create a false reference or a distraction or smokescreen. It's like all the carrying on is pointing to an "I" but don't look over there – keep your attention here because that "I" doesn't really exist.

Linda: Yes, the "I" doesn't exist. Every time you get into that sort of thing, that dialogue which most people do – I know I used to most of the time – it drives you crazy, so you do this. It's like you're trying to do anything but be here and see that this "I" doesn't exist. The "I" or the ego or the mind is fighting for its survival so it will do anything it can to not be here, because there's no room for it here. When you're fully here there's no "I" there. So your mind will do anything, try anything, to distract you – and everyone has got their favourite things at certain times. It's like you've created this mind and fed it over the years so it knows you intimately and knows what to do to really stir you up. So it's like you've created your own monster and keep beating up this monster and using things to keep it alive.

Question: I didn't really see that "I" didn't exist. But I saw what this is about.

Linda: It starts when we're really young and we're encouraged to be these unique individuals, whereas being this ego is not individual at all. Thinking is just rehashing your personal past and going, "Yes, this is me. This is me. This is me." And eventually you get too scared to be without a point of reference. The point-of-reference thing is interesting because you use your past as a point of reference, and thinking. And this is changing that point of reference, eventually, to now, which is not even a point of a reference but you use your body as a stepping stone into now rather than thinking.

Question: I'm feeling it more. I catch myself and come back quicker.

Linda: And it's great doing it at places like work as well because you start to see, "I can do this anywhere. It's not just when I'm sitting." So it's necessary, I feel, to do some formal practice but then it's just as necessary to test it out during work, whatever you're doing, walking to work, driving to work, being with your family, being with your friends, watching TV, watching a movie – you can do it at any time.

But it is possible to be free from it. It's not endless. And it doesn't take as long – if you're really earnest and serious about it – to become free from it or deconstruct it as it did to construct it. Like most things, it takes longer to put them up than to pull them down.

Question: Do you think once you've seen something, although it might take years, it's kind of the beginning of the end.

Linda: Yes, and you have to keep seeing everything. You'll get sick of seeing it but you can't pretend that you haven't seen it anymore. Once you've really seen it you can't go, "Oh, it's not there," which is what most people spend most of their lives doing, pretending it's not there.

Probably the scariest thing for a lot of people would be to be put in a room by themselves without any outside stimulation, no one to talk to, nothing to look at – just sit. I'd say, for most people that would be almost intolerable. Or to do something like this would be almost intolerable.

Question: I've had a really wonderful retreat. It's been painful and exciting and liberating. Things have dropped away or eased. It's just been a wonder.

Linda: Ah, that's good. I was going to ask before if anyone has any happy stories. 😊 (Laughter)

Question: I take myself so seriously, even this practice. What a load of crap for that to be so serious. Where's the joy and the lightness? Some that joy and lightness is really there.

Linda: Good. Yes, it's good not to take yourself too seriously.

Question: I had a lot of gratitude come out, that last sit. I sat through the break because of what you said at the beginning. It was a now-to-now thing – I got through the first thirty minutes, then through to the break. I was feeling pretty good so I continued. There're a few young men in front of me that were in there too but I just kept my eyes shut until the final bell. I had some tears come through for the gratitude for you and everything – the universe, nature.

Linda: Gratitude is a real sign of maturity.

Question: When you were practicing did you feel like you weren't going to make it or you didn't have what it takes – feelings like that at times?

Linda: Ah, it's a bit hard to remember but not much, because my teacher kept saying, "This is possible, you can do it," and I trusted him. So I didn't really have much doubt. There were some really, really difficult times but there was this strange – it's hard to explain – I don't think determination is the right word for it. It was almost like, "There's no way I'm not going to do this."

Question: How did you reconcile if you were struggling a lot and it felt really hard?

Linda: I didn't reconcile it. I just got through it. There were times when I did want to get out of it but I knew I couldn't. It was just a very vague feeling. Those feelings were part of it, it was a big part of the reason I was doing it. I knew that was why I was doing it because I felt that crap, and this was just a concentrated period of that. I could feel what it was so I would feel sometimes miserable, but I could sort of sense what it was. (Long pause) It was like all the misery I'd felt in my life – not that I had a miserable life, my life was fine, pretty good overall but I was still miserable – so it was like all that misery condensed into certain periods. I just sensed I had to go through it. I was sick of being a victim going, "Poor me," which is what I did quite a bit, "Poor me, everyone else is to blame, not

me.”

So yes, there’s no magic formula for getting through except maybe to have someone who keeps reassuring you that it is possible. For me that was the magic formula, to have this person going, “Yes, keep going, keep going, you’re on track, keep going.” So I did.